"Is The War Morally Justified?" (Fritz Wilke)

Twentieth-century arguments for the twenty-first century?

KARL-REINHART TRAUNER, WIEN

Introduction

Karl W. Schwarz works in many fields, two of which are historical research in matters of the Viennese Protestant-Theological Faculty and his activities as a military chaplain. Both fields converge at some points – essays of Karl W. Schwarz are a record of this[1] –, but they overlap in a special way when dealing with the incidents of 1914/18, when the members of the Viennese faculty decided to volunteer for military service. Ministers such as Joseph Beck sen. of the parish of Vienna-Waehring, or the professor of Old Testament Studies, Fritz Wilke, who was also Faculty Dean, encouraged the young students in their decision[2]. Wilke gave a lecture on war ethics, entitled "Is the War Morally Justified (Ist der Krieg sittlich berechtigt?)", which was published in 1915[3]. His construct of ideas to justify World War I is the nucleus of the following essay. But these ideas are part of a broader history of similar thoughts and concepts, which began in the early nineteenth century and, in some ways, continue until today.

One influential German representative of a "theology of war" was Werner Elert. He was one of the most important theorists of twentieth-century theology and also profoundly influenced the Austrian protestant theologians. Especially his *Morphologie des Luthertums*, first published in 1931/2 (2nd ed. 1958), laid out future developments for the Protestant Church, not only in Austria. His famous publication on dogmatics *Der christliche Glaube* was first published in 1940 (6th ed. 1988). Elert was military chaplain in World War I and reflected on his political positions and his experiences in different papers; his ideas correspond with Wilke's. When I studied theology during the 1980s Werner Elert mostly came up in discussions of church history, and was not regarded as an example of up-to-date theology. A few years ago, the professor of ec-

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1 Among others cf. Schwarz, Karl W., „Zur Gewährleistung der Seelsorge an den evangelischen Angehörigen des Bundesheeres: Der Staat und die Evangelische Militärseelsorge." Es gibt nie ein Zuviel an Seelsorge ..., hg. von Karl-Reinhart Trauner (Schriften zur Geschichte des Österreichischen Bundesheeres, vol. 11; Vienna: 2007, 130–136; ibid., Johann Michael Seberiny und die evangelische Militärseelsorge im alten Österreich. Aus der Vergangenheit in die Zukunft ..., hg. von Oskar Sakrausky/Karl-Reinhart Trauner, M&S, vol. 25; Wien 2008, 87–94).

2 For Fritz Wilke cf. Kieweler, Hans-Volker, Fritz Wilke und seine theologische Entwicklung. Zeitenwechsel und Beständigkeit, hg. von Karl Schwarz/Falk Wagner, Schriftenreihe des Universitätsarchivs Wien, vol. 10; Wien 1997, 295–324).

3 Wilke, Fritz: Ist der Krieg sittlich berechtigt? Leipzig 1915.

clesiastical history of Erlangen Protestant Faculty, Berndt Hamm, published an essay on Elert's war ethics[4].

Christmas 2002 I served as a military chaplain of the Austrian KFOR contingent ("Kosovo Force"). I had some contact to a Lutheran US military chaplain in Camp Bondsteel, the largest US camp in Kosovo. He, very proudly, gave me a booklet for use in chaplaincy and offered to provide me with as many copies as I wanted: *The Greatest Soldier Who Ever Lived*[5]. The booklet, written by Daniel R. Johnson (pastor of the Bible Baptist Church in Kokomo, In.) and circulated widely among American KFOR soldiers, reminded me in some respects of Wilke and Elert. Without knowing how representative the ideas of the booklet are of the US chaplaincy, the pamphlet might be taken as an example of some aspects of present-day war ethics.

A complete contrast is the 2007 memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany *(Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland/EKD) Live from God's Peace – Care for Just Peace (Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen)*, and the 2011 Ecumenical Call to Just Peace of the World Council of Churches[6].

The Initial Position

The two last-mentioned declarations are a response to the changes in the military security-political framework. Two of the major initial points of modern war ethics were the state monopoly on military force and the postulation of the primacy of policy at the end of the eighteenth and beginning nineteenth century. This understanding of war was concisely summed up in the explanation of war by the Prussian officer Carl von Clausewitz. In his important, posthumously (1832) published book *On War* (b. I, chap. I, art. 24) he described the same as "a mere continuation of policy by other means"; it "is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means. All beyond this which is strictly peculiar to war relates merely to the means which it uses ... for the political view is the object, war is the means..."[7]

This is not, and never was meant to be, an overall description or even definition of the general phenomenon that is warfare. Clausewitz's postulate is a programmatic assessment of contemporary European (not colonial) warfare, just as his historical research served only in the appraisal of the prevailing circumstances of his cultural context. He knew that war is always an expression of culture and often a determinant of cultural forms. Clausewitz "wished to design for his country's army a theory of war that would ensure it victory in the future ..."[8] With Clausewitz the state became the "monopolist of warfare"[9]. Therefore war could only be a military conflict between two states – what nowadays is called a "symmetric conflict".

The three wars which were waged by Otto von Bismarck to create a unified German Empire, and especially World War I, were examples of wars as described by Clausewitz.

Today the slogan of a "primacy of policy" seems to be changing in some respects. The peace declarations of the EKD and the World Council of Churches demand a development towards a "primacy of the civilian (Primat des Zivilen)" (EKD Peace Memorandum: art. 124/p. 80; passim). "Military action must remain only one component of a coherent policy that ultimately rests under civilian authority." (art.118/p.78).

In the Hapsburg Empire theologians were, according to military law (art. 29, 1912 Defence Act [Wehrgesetz]), exempt from military service. Nevertheless they shared the general enthusiasm for the Great War; only a small group of Czech students did not[10]. The pastor of Bielsko-Biała, Arthur Schmidt, even found a religious nature in the passion for war[11]. On the other hand, the church magazine *Wartburg* (nr. 32/1914, p. 285) which had strong German nationalist tendencies, called war "one of the most terrible evils. It is organised mass murder; this cannot be disavowed". The experience of the first months of warfare soon led to disillusionment. For the Protestant students a second development became important, however. Many of them came from eastern parts of the Monarchy. Especially combat operations in Galicia and the loss of some Galician areas let the plans grow to volunteer; not for service in the military chaplaincy, but in the regular troops[12]. Hans Koch, a war volunteer and officer in World War I as well as World War II, explained the motivation which led to the decision to volunteer in 1914/15: "as the Austrian weapons weren't very successful, the theologians regarded their privilege (the exemption from military service, ed.) as shameful"[13].

In November 1914 an assembly of the faculty decided to volunteer for military service in the troops. On 1 February 1915 the first of the – about – 50 student volunteers were deployed. Eleven of the so-called "war theologians (Kriegstheologen)" of the

4 Hamm, Berndt, Werner Elert als Kriegstheologe. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Diskussion „Luthertum und Nationalsozialismus". KZG/CCH 1998, nr. 2, 206–254.

5 Johnson, Daniel R.,The Greatest Soldier Who Ever Lived, ³2001 (¹1999]).

6 Aus Gottes Frieden leben – für gerechten Frieden sorgen, Eine Denkschrift des Rates der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, ²2007); online: www.ekd.de/download/ekd_friedensdenkschrift.pdf [retrieved: Feb. 2012]; a draft with a translation online: www.ekd.de/english/download/ekd_peace_memorandum(2).pdf [retrieved: Feb. 2012] – the notes in the text correspond with the original German print version; World Council of Churches, An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace, Geneva: 2011); online: www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/iepc/resources/ECJustPeace_English.pdf [retrieved: Feb. 2012]; Körtner, Ulrich H.J, „Gerechter Friede" – „gerechter Krieg" – Christliche Friedensethik vor neuen Herausforderungen., ZThK 2003, 348–377; Trauner, Karl-Reinhart, Das mehrdimensionale Verständnis von Krieg, Frieden und militärischem Einsatz, Amt und Gemeinde 2011, Heft 3 (154–164).

7 Clausewitz, Carl von, On War, transl. J. J. Graham, 3 vols. [in 1], London 1873, vol. 1, 12.

8 Keegan, John, A History of Warfare, New York 1994, 17.

9 Münkler, Herfried: Die neuen Kriege, Reinbek bei Hamburg ⁵2003, 9.

10 Trauner, Karl-Reinhart: „Das Urteil lautet: ... Tod durch Strang", Der Theologiestudent Ján Řezníček und der Zusammenbruch der Habsburgermonarchie, Communio Viatorum 1/2005, 3–32.

11 [Anon.:], Hebt der Krieg die Religion auf? Monatsbeilage für theologische Wissenschaft und Praxis 10/1915 (annexe to EKZÖ 1915, nr. 20; 37–39) and 11/1915 (annexe to EKZÖ 1915, nr. 22; 41).

12 Trauner, Karl-Reinhart, Vom Hörsaal in den Schützengraben, Evangelische Theologiestudenten im Ersten Weltkrieg (Szentendre: 2004).

13 Koch, Hans, Kyr Theodor, Wien, n.d. 1967, 96.

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Donauwellen – Zum Protestantismus in der Mitte Europas

Viennese Protestant Theological Faculty were killed in action, seven died of late-term consequences[14].

The early stages of the Great War with its coexistence of enthusiasm and anti-climax, of striving towards an acceptance of personal and public responsibility, and ideas unacceptable to present-day theology, characterise Fritz Wilke's programmatic pamphlet.

Wilke was aware of the fact that "a judgment on the moral authorisation of war could never gain undivided approval" (pp. 8f.), caused by the tensions between Christian charity and the realities of war (pp. 15–29). But using Old Testament *topoi* he arrived at the conclusion that "the war appears as a natural means in the struggle for existence of the people" (p. 16); the Clausewitzian description of war shines through. The Biblical "ideal peace among nations", as described by Isaiah, is for Wilke eschatological and therefore unrealistic in the present world (p. 18).

Fragility of an International Peace Order

The initial point of Fritz Wilke's line of argumentation was the fragility of the international peace order. International law was still only in the early stages of its development. In 1899 and 1907 peace conferences were held in The Hague; in 1907 the Second Convention of The Hague clarified the rules of land warfare. The Convention did not proscribe war as a political instrument – that was not written down until the 1928 Briand-Kellogg Pact which banned war. The proscription of aggressive war was confirmed and broadened in the United Nations Charter of 1945[15] which states in Article 2 (4) that "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state ..."

The superpowers of the days before World War I were, however, not willing to accept these rules without *ifs* and *buts*, and especially Germany's rejection of disarmament increased the general mistrust. For Austro-Hungary, whose declaration of war against Serbia started World War I, the political position in the world was very shaky. The reason for the declaration of war was the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who was murdered by unofficial Serbian Secret Service circles. Using today's language one could talk of an act of international terrorism.

The time after World War II and especially the Cold War brought manifold regulations concerning the waging of war. The nuclear arms race and the possibilities of multiple world destruction supported the conviction that war can never be used as a political instrument. Thus the Austrian philosopher Heimo Hofmeister could define war as "non- and/or anti-politics [Un-Politik, ed.]"[16].

As a consequence of this approach, peace, not war issues, became the centre of military ethics, or "peace ethics" as it is called in Germany. But there is a basic difference between Wilke's or Elert's military ethical approach and modern military ethical models. Wilke or Elert formulated their thoughts in the face of an ongoing war, or personal experience of a concrete war situation. Thus they primarily concentrated on war, which was the point of departure for their thoughts. The military ethics of the Cold War and of today was/is designed in the face of a threatened but existing peace.

Supporting peace and stabilising the political situation is the main aim of present military ethics, even though peace must not be grounded in rotten compromise; a recently published study of Avishai Margalit (*On Compromise and Rotten Compromises*, 2010) gives impressive examples. But the threat to peace is increasing. The break-down of the bipolar world order radically changed the international security architecture. Modern threats are more dynamic than those of Cold War times. That has far-reaching consequences, not only for military ethics[17], but does not question peace as the centre of military ethics; and not war.

Peace is more than the absence or termination of war, the EKD Peace Memorandum of 2007 (art. 75/p. 52) could postulate. Thus peace is not a political condition but the result of a societal process of decreasing violence and increasing fairness (art. 80/p. 54). This suggests a comprehensive approach of different political and societal measures and a "multidimensional concept of peace" (art. 78/p. 53). The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Call to Just Peace (art. 11/p. 5) states, that "Just Peace may be comprehended as a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships ..."

A major challenge to present-day peace is – similar to Wilke's "analysis" of 1915 – the instability of the global security structure. The war regulations could prevent most of the conflicts as laid down in Article 2 of the Geneva Convention[18] – that means an "armed conflict which may arise between two or more of the High Contracting Parties ..." Other kinds of war, however, so-called asymmetric wars, have become common especially in underdeveloped regions. As opposed to the German term "Krieg", the Anglo-American understanding covers a broader spectrum, including asymmetric conflicts. Webster's *Comprehensive Dictionary*[19] describes "war" as "1) A contest between or among nations or states, or between different parties in the same state, carried on by force and with arms. 2) Any act or state of hostility; enmity; strife; also, a contest or conflict ..."

The well-known political scientist Herfried Münkler invented the term "new wars [Neue Kriege, ed.]". Very often these are intrastate conflicts, and are being waged by

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14 A list of the students and theologians killed can be found in Trauner, Vom Hörsaal ..., 137.

15 Charter of the United Nations [1945]; online: www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml [retrieved: Feb. 2011].

16 Hofmeister, Heimo, Der Wille zum Krieg oder die Ohnmacht der Politik, Göttingen: 2001, 68.

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17 Trauner, Karl-Reinhart, Grundlagen und Struktur der (christlichen) Militärethik im aktuellen Spektrum des österreichischen Bundesheeres, Vielfalt in Uniform, hg. von Wolfgang Schober (Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, vol. 1/2005; Wien 2005, 219–301).

18 Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field [1949]; online: www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/FULL/365?OpenDocument [retrieved: Feb. 2012].

19 The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language, Encyclopedic Edition n.pl. 2003, 1416.

non-governmental organisations or actors, such as warlords. The failing of states and the concomitant instability is a major reason for the endangering or destruction of peaceful conditions, as well as for the terrorist threat to the Western world. Very often the new wars are proxy wars for the super powers. They, however, are also becoming targets of non-governmental, terrorist organisations, or of organisations close to a state, or of a rival super power: "cyber war" uses the huge opportunities the world-wide-web offers to threaten and to terrorise, as a study of Richard A. Clarke and Robert K. Knake (*Cyber war*, 2010) finds.

A difficult question deals with the role of culture and religion in conflicts. Without overemphasising Samuel P. Huntington's ideas on *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1ˢᵗ ed. 1996), even the EKD Peace Memorandum (art. 4/p. 12) has to accept the existence of "cultural and religious lines of contact [Begegnungslinien, ed.]", where "conflicts … are emerging". "Yet often the link between cultural and religious factors with social, economic, or power-politics approaches, leads to the outbreak of violence or the escalation of (armed) conflicts" (art. 31/pp. 24f.).

The developments during the last decades illustrate the instability of the world order, including the decisions of international organisations, such as in former times the League of Nations and today's United Nations Organization. Structures such as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union are attempts at a more stable security architecture, with a worldwide radius of operation. All in all, the principle of just peace – not justified war – "depends in its realisation on just law", the EKD Peace Memorandum states programmatically (art. 85/p. 57), and the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace of the World Council of Churches confirms this (art. 21/p. 7; cf. art. 1/p. 2, art. 3/p. 2): "The 'rule of law' is a critical framework for all … efforts …" International law as the most important part of (good) global governance (cf. EKD Peace Memorandum art. 125/p. 80) is, for the both peace declarations, essentially connected to the UN. But such demands indirectly express that there is a large gap in this field.

Under the impression of his time's uncertainties, the Viennese professor Fritz Wilke analysed the political situation in his text's third chapter which is headlined "Arbitration and the Life of Nations (Schiedsgericht und Völkerleben)". He asserts, among others, the powerlessness of the court in The Hague in important international decisions, and questions the court (and with that a peace order) *per se*: "Yes, in the light of the existing relations between the nations, as they have developed historically, it has to be called almost an impossibility to achieve generally adequate, completely impartial judgements." (p. 44) With that Wilke addressed the (then) realities of world politics which used repressions.

This leads to the necessity of defensive measures, including also military operations. This is the nature of an "Emergency War [Notkrieg, ed.]", the title of Wilke's fourth chapter. For Wilke it was clear that Austro-Hungary's war against Serbia, and subsequently many other states, was such an emergency war.

Emergency War and pre-emptive war

Today the idea of an emergency war is not unfamiliar to us, even though the term is no longer used. Having been attacked or threatened by an enemy was the reason for the US-dominated wars against Iraq or Afghanistan. The war on terrorism serves as a substantial explanation. The Charter of the UN concedes the right to self-defence. Article 51 declares: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations …"

The crucial question of present-day politics is the line between offensive and defensive policy. Wilke (p. 58) could declare – still validly – that "only an emergency war can be recognized as morally justified". Obviously there is a distinction between an emergency war and a defensive war. It was Austro-Hungary which declared war in 1914, and not Serbia; even though it was Austro-Hungary which felt attacked by Serbia. Therefore it was, following Wilke, an emergency war, and no defensive war.

Wilke puts the events of 1914 in a broader context. "Because it might be that a nation is surrounded in political and economic matters by a ring of envious neighbours. If this situation continues for a longer time, the vitality of this nation is lost, and it must decay and go to ruin. This happened during the last years to the Germans and Austro-Hungary. If such a nation jumps to arms under such circumstances, after all peaceful attempts to remove the intolerable pressure, the nation wages an emergency war." (pp. 58f.) Thus, World War I is – for the Central Powers – a morally justified emergency war (p. 60).

This concept of an emergency war is reminiscent of today's "pre-emptive war"[20]. In his speech at West Point on 1 June 2002, US President Georg W. Bush, who was the political mastermind of the pre-emptive war idea, supported[21] a policy of deterrence, because "if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. … We must take the battle to the enemy … and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act."

To clarify this concept, William H. Taft IV, legal adviser at the State Department, issued a statement on 13 January 2003. A state's "significant military power … would not, in the absence of any evidence that it intends to use its power against others aggressively, justify a pre-emptive strike against it." But a state had the right to defend itself from "catastrophic harm" and take a pre-emptive action "after the exhaustion of peaceful remedies, and after careful consideration of the consequences" if there was "overwhelming evidence of an imminent threat"[22].

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[20] Stover, William, Preemptive War: Implications of the Bush and Rumsfeld Doctrines, International Journal on World Peace vol. XXI (2004), nr. 1, 3–13.

[21] The speech online (hosted by the US Air Force Magazine): www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Documents/2007/June %202007/0607keeperfull.pdf [retrieved: Feb. 2012].

[22] Quoted in Christol, Carl Q., International Law and U.S. Foreign Policy, Lanham (Md.) 2004, 246.

According to international law, a defensive war is legal and a preventive war illegal, because it is similar to a war of aggression. A pre-emptive war lies between these two. The adoption of a pre-emptive war model involved a change in the meaning of the term "preventive war". There is a consensus on the basic understanding, namely that a preventive war is initiated to prevent being attacked. The term was first used in the language of diplomacy in the eighteenth century in its French form *guerre preventive*. There is also a consensus that war "goes beyond what is acceptable in international law"[23] and lacks any legal basis.

The perniciousness of the case lies in the definitions. In the 1970s the famous German *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon* defined "preventive war" (vol. 19 [1977], p. 216) in a narrow sense as "a war that is initiated to forestall the certain attack of an opponent; in a wider sense 'preventive war' is also used for wars with which an expected enemy attack or a grave shift in the balance of power ... should be countered." Contrary to this, recently published works emphasise the fact that in a preventive war one state attacks, even though an attack of the other state is not imminent, or known to be planned. In this case the only purpose of a preventive war is to destroy or weaken another state without any cause for a (military) conflict.

Together with the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and especially with the 2003 Iraq War, another model of waging war began to be debated. The US-Iraq war was described as a pre-emptive war which nowadays is defined as a first strike when an attack is imminent. That means that a preventive war is launched to destroy the *potential* threat of an enemy when an attack by that party is not imminent, while a pre-emptive war is launched in anticipation of *immediate* enemy aggression.

During the last decades the definition of what constitutes a – forbidden – preventive war became ever narrower. Some parts of its former meaning are nowadays regarded as pre-emptive. According to the US point of view, pre-emptive military measures are legitimated by Article 51 of the UN Charter; some European, even military, experts regard the situation in a different way[24]. The questions of the legality of pre-emptive operations and their moral justification are part of the Just War Theory, which is still a major basis of international law[25]. Both peace declarations mentioned above distance themselves from the Just War Theory, because it would justify – under certain circumstances – waging war as a political instrument.

With regards to its content, the Just War Theory deals only with interstate armed conflicts, which in German are called "Krieg". The only justification to wage war is defence. The criteria of justification (or non-justification) of military means cannot be simply transferred to asymmetric situations. Although the churches' peace declarations deny the Just War Theory, they stress that "this does not mean that we ought or need

to reject the moral criteria that the *bellum iustum* model employed", so the EKD Peace Memorandum (art. 102/p. 68). This, however, also has the side effect that what used to be a vital criterion becomes a mere point of ethical considerations.

The probably most interesting input of modern peace or military ethics is the demand for a *ius post bellum*: in approximately half of all countries, war breaks out again in the first five years after the cessation of hostilities. Hence, regulations that support peace in the post-war scenario are of the essence. Civil mechanisms have to create and strengthen social peace.

Religious Groundings of War?

The wars of the nineteenth and twentieth century were not mere rational instruments of politics oriented along logic. The explosion of enthusiasm at the beginning of World War I was, for all (European) nations, only one example of the emotional side of warfare. The solely instrumental understanding of war, as expounded most prominently by Clausewitz, was transformed into an existential one – a tendency that still continues today, especially under the heading of the war on terror[26].

In Daniel R. Johnson's booklet, mentioned at the outset, the line between political and religious argumentations is also unclear – he even combines these two realms. The purpose of the short pamphlet – a half-hour read – is unquestionably not to justify military employments, but to lead the reader to Christianity, and it ends with a description of three steps "to become a Christian" (pp. 85–90). It is written as an evangelistic tool. Author Daniel R. Johnson unfolds historically-based fiction. Only after the death of a World War II veteran does his grandson Tom discover who the older man really was and what he did.

But for Johnson the military task also has quasi-religious motives. The leading character can state that "we (the US soldiers of World War II, ed.) fought to defeat fascism, Jesus died and rose again to defeat sin" (p. 61). Both Jesus and the US soldiers were "constantly being attacked by a bound of religious warriors called Pharisees" (p. 55). With that the German *Wehrmacht* is rather problematically compared to the Pharisees, who Flavius Josephus (b. II, chap. VIII, par. 14[27]) described as people "who are reputed accurate expositors of the laws, and hence derive their fundamental dogma, ascribe everything to fate and God ...".

The soldiers certainly did not deliver the people from their sins. They, however, delivered people from Hitler's power. The fictitious narrator summarises his impressions: "I remember seeing the fear and emptiness on the faces of the people who had endured Hitler's rampage of Europe. Other soldiers told me how sacred and broken the

23 Shaw, Malcolm N.: International Law, (Cambridge [et al.], ⁶2008), 1140.

24 Lepel, Oskar Matthias Frh. von, Die präemptive Selbstverteidigung im Lichte des Völkerrechts. Humanitäres Völkerrecht vol. 16 (2003), 77–81; Wiefelspütz, Dieter, Das Gewaltverbot und seine Durchbrechungen ...., Zeitschrift für Politik 2006, nr. 2, 143–171.

25 When the EKD Peace Memorandum demands a "preventive" task of intervention (such as in art.130/p.84 or art.179/p.113) it does not mean a preventive or pre-emptive military intervention, but anticipatory and precautionary arrangements with a comprehensive, multidimensional approach.

26 Micewski, Edwin Rüdiger, Ethical, Political, and Military Implications of Asymmetric Conflict and Warfare." Ein Offizier als Philosoph – Schriften von Edwin Rüdiger Micewski, hg. von Barbara Schörner/Günther Fleck Frankfurt/M. [et al.] 2009, 113–129, 126f.

27 Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, transl. Robert Traill, vol. 1, London: 1851, 205.

people were that they rescued from the concentration camps." (pp. 53f.) What cannot be questioned is the historical fact of the US Army helping to liberate Europe. Comparing soldiers to Jesus is, however, highly dubious. Johnson also concedes differences: for example that "our (the US soldiers, ed.) hatred of the enemy intensified with every passing day of battle", whilst "Jesus, however, offered His enemies numerous chances to surrender and join the forces of freedom" (p. 56).

The statement concerning the US soldiers' hatred of the German soldiers leads back to the initial topic. An exceptional form of emotionalising war is the use of religious patterns for its justification. George W. Bush characterised the war on terrorism as a crusade and used religious language for his "theology of Empire"[28] – the enemy becomes demonised.

Daniel R. Johnson's pamphlet indirectly constructs a polarising concept of friend or foe which is immune to any possibility of differentiation. This impression is underlined by presenting the Pharisees as Jesus' militant opponents and referring to them as "enemies of Christ" (p. 55). In a German context such statements would be assessed as – at least subliminal – anti-Semitic patterns.

About sixty years earlier, the important German theologian Werner Elert wrote in a similar vein, drawing on his experiences of World War I. In 1941 he described World War II not as a crusade, but as "a case of emergency against infiltration by an overwhelming satanic will of God's enemies. And the sword which has now been unsheathed is a holy sword" (Hamm, p. 215).

Daniel R. Johnson's booklet has another intention. Although the pamphlet does not serve the purpose of justifying war, but to evangelise, it uses strong military images. Thus *The Greatest Soldier who Ever Lived* (the booklet's title) is ... Jesus Christ (p. 49) – even though He prayed for and preached peace and non-violence. Modern theology feels confident that war, just as every other use of destructive violence, is a sin. This is the core message of the EKD Peace Memorandum (art. 37/p. 29), as well as of the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace of the World Council of Churches which states unmistakably (art.4/p.2) that "Jesus told us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and not to use deadly weapons." Jesus is in every way the very antithesis of a soldier. For the World Council of Churches the use of military force (art. 24/p. 8) is a "moral dilemma".

But the story of the (fictitious) central figure of the book gives the reason for this astonishing and highly problematic image of Jesus. The leading character portrays his life and acceptance of Jesus Christ in a letter to his grandson Tom, which forms the main part of the publication. The old US soldier, who participated in the Normandy landings, describes the deployment "of the 12 million Americans who wore the uniform during World War II" as a "sacrifice" (p. 43).

This narrow understanding of sacrifice is closely connected to heroism. Traditionally, soldiers who are killed in such situations are called "heroes". Before World War II, in

1937, Werner Elert stated programmatically that nowhere does the "Christian ability of devotion stand out more luminously and exemplary than in the military sacrifice of one's own life."[29]

In 1915 Wilke already stated that war forced order on diverging powers. War was the disposer and composer of national life, the founder of the nations, and the organiser of the states. War compensates for the tragic losses of human life with the protection, clarification and strengthening of the whole community as well as of the younger generation by creating and building the new (p. 120). Thus an individual's propensity to sacrifice and especially his sacrificial death would give a deeper meaning to the (remaining) world.

Although written in completely different circumstances and from a totally different perspective, the modern booklet of Johnson in some ways approaches things similarly: "Great love will lead to great sacrifice, and great sacrifice will lead to great opportunity." (p. 44) The main actor confessed: "My love for my country motivated me to be willing to sacrifice it all on the battlefields of Europe." (p. 44)

Defined this way, war takes on a fundamentalist character akin to modern terrorism. War becomes a "war in the head (Krieg im Kopf)"[30]. The fifth chapter of Wilke's considerations discusses "Militarism [Militarismus, ed.]". Wilke defends the policy of the Central Powers which sped up (particularly the German Empire) their industrialisation by, among other things, hugely increasing armament output. At the same time, Wilke also defends educating the public so as to increase their military willingness and preparedness [Wehrbereitschaft, ed.].

But on the other hand it is remarkable that Wilke, despite his ideas, did not use any military or militaristic language – in complete contrast to Johnson's evangelical pamphlet. One example may be enough. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Normandy landings the fictitious narrator is confronted with the Christian message. In the course of this, a very military picture of Jesus is painted. He "was ... born during a time of great difficulty and darkness" (p. 48), and the apostles are called "squad of twelve men" (p. 57); "squad" is a technical term for a military organisational unit of approximately ten soldiers.

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28 Wallis, Jim: "Dangerous Religion, George W. Bush's Theology of Empire." Mississippi Review vol. 32, nr. 3, 60–72); cf. Stam, Juan, Bush's Religious Language. The Nation Dec. 22, 2003; online: www.thenation.com/article/bushs-religious-language [retrieved: Feb. 2012].

29 Quoted in Hamm, 229.

30 In his article on Werner Elert, Berndt Hamm uses the title of an exhibition in Erlangen "War in the Head [Krieg im Kopf, ed.]". "The bloody reality of war is only possible because it is prepared in the head, longed for, justified, transfigured and exaggerated so as to give meaning. This is how war becomes recognizable as a long-lasting syndrome starting a long time before the war actually begins and having continuing effects after the end of war, as a fertile soil of basic postures, values, examples, symbols and linguistic influence, briefly said: as a problem of mentality.", Hamm, 206.

War as Charity?

The topic of heroically sacrificing one's life is closely related to the paradigm that risking one's own life is the highest form of patriotic charity. Heroism achieves the character of charity both in Wilke's and Elert's ideas, as well as in Johnson's. War ethics can obviously not exist without commemorating the soldiers killed or missing in action. Commemorations are conducive to provoking solidarity with soldiers in military operations. One year after the beginning of World War I, in 1915, Fritz Wilke's booklet *Is the War Morally Justified?* was published. It is dedicated "to the heroes in the field with thanks and in honour". On the whole, the booklet is an academic treatise lacking any practical relevance; it is far removed from any front-line experience.

The thrust of Daniel R. Johnson's text is completely contrary to this. The horror of war serves – absolutely realistically – as the starting point of the story: "Dead bodies were everywhere, gunfire was raging, and many of the wounded were screaming in pain." (p. 36) With these words the author describes the Normandy landings on the morning of 6 June 1944. Retrospectively, the narrator states: "Some of the best and bravest men I have ever known died in World War II." (p. 40) The pain and dying of the soldiers confronted the main character with a fundamental search for meaning: "Why did I get to live, when so many died?" (p. 40) For the narrator this is the point where he turns towards Christ's message. This way the author can characterise and glorify the soldiers as combatants for freedom. "We were all afraid, but we knew that our freedom depended upon winning this war." (p. 29) The soldiers killed are not only victims, but their deaths become a sacrifice, even more: a sacrifice in the service of charity (p. 44).

This is the author's answer to the old and controversially discussed question of the relationship between the Christian faith and the military. According to Wilke, the order to be charitable does not concern all people equally; there is no commandment on "general charity": "Our proverbial neighbour is everybody who needs our help first, and love shouldn't express itself in feelings or considerations, but, indeed, in active help." (p. 20) Thus the field soldiers of the respective country would be such a neighbour; they are to be helped.

Wilke interprets the order to love one's enemies as a "disposition, the right attitude and the basic direction of the will in which the strength of God's Gospel is affected. If this explanation is appropriate, then, however, the word of the love for enemies can impossibly have the sense that the Christian has to suffer every insult always and under all circumstances and has to retreat in the face of every enemy." (p. 26)

A similar document, written by Franz Köhler in 1917 (one year before the end of World War I), states self-assuredly: "We are inspired by the imperturbable faith that we bring liberty and love as victory spoils from the war for everyone who wants to go forward, to go up; confidence and love for everyone who, like us, strives for the highest, and the lasting happiness in God, who is all life's life. In the end, the war justifies

itself from this highest of perspectives in our religious and moral self-confidence. And only this way do we fight and wage the war."[31]

Wilke's ideas represent a long tradition of Lutheran theology. The second chapter of *Is The War Morally Justified?* discusses the topic of a divine order of creation under the title "National Ethos or World Citizenship? [Völkische Gesinnung oder Weltbürgertum?, ed.]". According to Wilke, every human being is born into a certain people and nation. This is "a field of work assigned by God [gottgewiesenes Arbeitsfeld, ed.]" (p. 39). Wilke, however, made an ideology of this theological topos with his comments that this natural and divine order of creation cannot be nullified by multicultural cosmopolitism. With his remark of a "field of work assigned by God" Wilke becomes part of a crucial discussion of the inter-war period in Germany, a discussion powerfully influenced by Werner Elert. The Erlangen systematic theologian Berndt Hamm states (pp. 219f.) that "In Elert's eyes the German nation is such an order of creation, being a biological-racial blood connection, as well as, at the same time, by being rooted in biological inheritance, a spiritual, emotionally linked national community. The Christian feels himself bound by God to this 'national' connection."

In 1944 Werner Elert condensed this line of thought. The gospel had taught Martin Luther "to understand his people as the space in which – not apart from which – the absolute devotion to God has to be fulfilled. The church must not claim any sacred space *apart from* the people's community. Only by relating to God does a racial ethos become possible; only because of that does our obligation become an *everlasting* obligation."[32] – The connection to national-socialist racial ideology is apparent.

The integration of the individual into the collective of a people's life is for both, Wilke as well as Elert, the basis of charity. Man is committed to "the devotion to the proverbial neighbour – and for Elert this means above all being available for the devotion to the national community and for employment in the service of the nation state without reserve. Thus Elert gives the thought of freedom ... a spin towards the subject's political and military readiness in a totalitarian state." (pp. 226f.) The concept of understanding military service as a form of charity was one building block on the road towards a murderous racial ideology in Germany. Berndt Hamm (p. 223) describes the historic course: "Indeed, as a conservative Lutheran, Elert continues the old line of the idea of God as a God of Hosts, and the instrumentalised Bible verses and hymns, the line from 1813, 1870 and 1914 with its appeals to Luther and Bismarck. At the same time, however, as a modern theologian after World War I and increasingly after 1933, he more and more turns to the new paradigms of a national/racial ideology."

However, this view of a soldier's sacrifice is also the bridge to another motive which can be found in current arguments. War and the sacrifice connected with it become the turning point towards the good, "the sacrifice of the 12 million Americans who wore

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31 Köhler, Franz, Das religiös-sittliche Bewußtsein im Weltkrieg (1917), quoted in Wengst, Klaus: „Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär' – ein feste Burg ist unser Gott', Protestantische Kriegstheologie im Ersten Weltkrieg." Freiheit gestalten: Zum Demokratieverständnis des deutschen Protestantismus, hg. von Dirk Bockermann/Norbert Friedrich/Christian Illian/Traugott Jähnichen/Susanne Scharz, Göttingen: 1996, 130–138, 138.

32 Elert, Werner: Letter to an unknown pastor (Aug. 19, 1944), quoted in Hamm, annexe II, 248–254, 250 (underlining of the original text).

the uniform during World War II led to the opportunity that our country [the USA, ed.] has enjoyed ever since" (pp. 43f.). The willingness for sacrifices created the basis to "build the greatest opportunities for peace, prosperity, and happiness in the history of the world" (p. 45). This motive can already be found at the beginning of World War I. Wilke asks the key question in the sixth chapter of his booklet, titled "The Economic Life [Das Wirtschaftsleben, ed.]": "Where, however, is culture in this view of a moral right to wage war and to use weapons?" (p. 81)

The theologian arrives at the conclusion that in a war culture would be threatened mostly in its material value. Otherwise a war is by no means hostile to culture, as Wilke tries to make clear in the seventh chapter "The Intellectual Culture [Die Geisteskultur, ed.]". Wilke therefore could use his eighth chapter dealing with "The Philosophy of Life [Lebensauffassung, ed.]" to justify the countless human victims a war causes: "If one considers this point of view in the problem of the destruction of lives, the moral side is already sufficiently explained with the earlier arguments on the right to national self-preservation and emergency war." (p. 114)

Theology becomes Ideology

Especially in political issues, the after-effects of these nineteenth-century ideas on German Protestant theology are manifest up to the middle of the twentieth century. While the idea of a patriarchal and mighty God was strongly influenced by the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon's aggressive policies, Johnson's topical pamphlet *The Greatest Soldier Who Ever Lived* goes in a completely different direction.

German war theology spoke of a powerful and even destructive God of war – He was the God of War. A text by Franz Köhler, a German World War I military chaplain, expressed this notion of God as follows (p. 131): "The false splendour of a poor, degenerate world culture is smashed into a thousand pieces by God. But only because he wants to build up a new world. To Him the war is a tool to do both, to destroy and to create." And in another place (p. 133): "the destroyer *war* ... has made us ... give up the belief in the innate kind-heartedness of people."

At the same time, however, God's actions were interpreted as man's destiny – a clear heritage of the Wars of Liberation. In the 1930s and 40s such thinking dominated the discussion of the theology of God's order of creation, a discussion which embraced and expanded ideological tendencies. God's power over destiny [Schicksalsmacht Gottes, ed.] meant for theologian Werner Elert "that all world affairs come from God's hand, even the gruesome ones, as well as fear, suffering and deaths of the war. While he [Elert, ed.] also includes the horror in God's being and acting, God gains characteristics of the demonical, even the evil and militantly violent" (Hamm, 217).

The argumentation of Johnson's booklet is completely different, but no less problematic. The soldier of German theology was doing God's work. In this tradition the soldier had to deal with a gap between God and himself – the US-American booklet constructs, in stark contrast to this, an identification between the soldier and Jesus.

For both, Jesus just as well as the soldier, "love, sacrifice, and opportunity" (p. 48) are the key motivations. The gearing towards the nation is underlined by the cover of the booklet where the title *The Greatest Soldier Who Ever Lived* is underlaid with a US-American flag.

The way in which this identification is worked out, appears simplistic, almost simple-minded to central Europeans – and quite alarming in its simple-mindedness. "Just as we [the US-American soldiers of 1944, ed.] did in World War II, this soldier [Jesus Christ, ed.] also went to a faraway land to fight for freedom. He [and this includes also the US soldiers, ed.] was motivated by the deepest love imaginable, expressed the greatest sacrifice in history, and created the most magnificent opportunity for all mankind." (pp. 48f.) Just like the US soldiers landed in Normandy, "He [Jesus Christ, ed.] landed on enemy Earth" (p. 50) to deliver people from sin. Jesus came "to earth to rescue people from their prison camp of sins" (p. 52). – An analogy between US soldiers rescuing people from prison camps and Jesus' coming appears highly questionable, if not dubious, in the face of *Abu Ghraib* and *Guantanamo*.

Daniel R. Johnson certainly knows about the triviality of a simple analogy. He admits that "Unlike the war in which I [the fictive narrator and US soldier, ed.] fought, Jesus' battles were not fought with bombs, rifles, or bayonets, but with the truth of God, the performance of miracles, and the compassion of godliness." (pp. 54f.) The author also accepts that "Jesus came to earth not to conquer" – like the US soldiers – "but to liberate" (p. 51).

Comparing some aspects of Jesus' life and death with man's life and death is not a religious problem, this is part of Christian theology. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him ..." (Gen 1:27). But on the whole, the author compares Jesus' actions with the military actions of US soldiers. There might even be some parallels; "... from day one He was 'under fire,' precisely as we [the US soldiers, ed.] were when we stepped out of the boats in the early morning hours of D-Day."[33] (p. 52). It is debatable whether the "fire" on Jesus could really be compared to German gunfire. But even if this were the case, such an analogy certainly does not permit a comparison between Jesus' acts of existential salvation and the soldiers' acts carried out by means of military weapons.

Such historically anchored patterns are more than a mere means of modern evangelisation and cannot be regarded as simple churches' tools. In Johnson's booklet this is spelled out clearly (pp. 74f.): "... while my generation [the generation of war, ed.] may have sacrificed to make it possible for you [the young generation, ed.] to grow up in the greatest country on earth, Jesus' sacrifice makes it possible for you to grow up in the greatest kingdom in eternity." Such patterns influence the self-image not only of the soldiers of the present, but of the civil society as a whole. President Bush's statements with their use of religious images illustrate a self-image of being the world's liberator from "sin". Indeed, the USA is unmistakably shown as the prime example of a land of freedom; it is therefore called the "greatest country on earth" (p. 74).

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33 In historical context the term "D-Day" normally describes the day of the landing of US troops in Normandy on the June 6, 1944.

Turning back the time to barely a hundred years ago, Fritz Wilke's 1915 statements on war theology laid out positions, which would – in the times of World War II – be used to justify a war, which was both religiously *and* morally unjustifiable. Berndt Hamm (p. 216) comments: "Theology becomes ideology, just as theology can religiously bolster an already existing ideology – provided that the distinguishing attribute of ideology is *derealization*, the obfuscation of reality by means of idea constructs."

It is indisputable that Wilke as well as Elert obviously tried to work out a trenchant Christian and Protestant position, but that its Christian grounding often wilted – an obvious result of a misunderstanding of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. During the nineteenth and beginning twentieth century the boundary between the earthly kingdom and the heavenly kingdom broke down in favour of the earthly kingdom. This development increased under the influence (as well as in spite) of the Third Reich: "The secularization of the ethical" is combined "with a sanctification of the political" (Hamm, p. 233).

Epilogue

Modern military ethics knows that it is anchored in the secular, but respects religion both as a means of reconciliation, as well as an agent of conflict. Christian religions value peace as a central part of the Gospel, God's *good news (euangelion)*. Neither Wilke, Elert, or Johnson would contradict that. The EKD Peace Memorandum draws the conclusion (art.80/p.54): only "… just peace is the ultimate goal of political ethics". Peace is not only the aim, but also the measure of a policy oriented towards the future. This means that the old dictum "'si vis pacem para bellum' ('if you want peace, prepare for war') … has to be put aside in favour of the principle, 'si vis pacem para pacem' ('if you want peace, prepare for peace')." (art. 75/p. 52)

In one point does Johnson's text substantially differ from the older lines of argumentation set out in European religious war literature such as Wilke's or Elert's. For Johnson God is no God of revenge, as so often in nineteenth and twentieth century European literature, but a forgiving God: "Please don't fall for the idea that God is the kind of judge who weighs the evidence to see if you've been good or bad. Heaven is not reserved for those who act well, but for those who are forgiven." (pp. 71f.)

Michael Bünker, Ernst Hofhansl, Raoul Kneucker (Hg.)

Donauwellen

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